CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1   1.   A method for optimizing output device utilization on a network
2   including at least one output device, the method comprising:
3   (a)   tracking utilization information for each output device;
4   (b)   analyzing the utilization information for optimization
5   opportunities; and,
6   (c)   configuring the network to exploit the optimization
7   opportunities.

1   2.   The method of claim 1 wherein tracking utilization information
2   includes:
3   (a)   periodically retrieving the utilization information; and,
4   (b)   archiving the retrieved utilization information.

1   3.   The method of claim 1 wherein tracking utilization information
2   includes tracking utilization information selectively from network print clients,
3   network print servers and network output devices.

1   4.   The method of claim 1 wherein analyzing the utilization information
2   includes searching selectively for underused and overused output devices.

1   5.   The method of claim 1 wherein analyzing the utilization information
2   for optimization opportunities includes applying rules to the utilization
3   information.

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1   6.   The method of claim 5 wherein applying rules to the utilization

2   information includes selectively optimizing for lowest cost, highest quality,

3   soonest output and output closest to an originating print client.

1   7.   The method of claim 1 wherein configuring the network includes

2   selectively configuring network print clients, network print servers and network

3   output devices.

1   8.   A system for optimizing output device utilization on a network

2   including at least one output device, the system comprising:

3   (a)   a monitor configured to track utilization information for each

4   output device;

5   (b)   an inspector configured to analyze the utilization information

6   for optimization opportunities; and,

7   (c)   an administrator configured to configure the network to

8   exploit the optimization opportunities.

1   9.   The system of claim 8 wherein the monitor includes:

2   (a)   a retriever configured to periodically retrieve the utilization

3   information; and,

4   (b)   a utilization log configured to archive the retrieved utilization

5   information.

1   10.   The system of claim 8 wherein the monitor is further configured to

2   track utilization information selectively from network print clients, network print

3   servers and network output devices.

1   11.   The system of claim 8 wherein the inspector includes an

2   investigator configured to search selectively for underused and overused output

3   devices.

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1   12.   The system of claim 8 wherein the inspector includes a manager
2   configured to apply rules to the utilization information.

1   13.   The system of claim 12 wherein the manager includes an optimizer
2   configured to selectively optimize for lowest cost, highest quality, soonest
3   output and output closest to an originating print client.

1   14.   The system of claim 8 wherein the administrator is further
2   configured to selectively configure network print clients, network print servers
3   and network output devices.

1   15.   A program storage device readable by a computer, tangibly
2   embodying a program, applet or instructions executable by the computer to
3   perform method steps for optimizing output device utilization on a network
4   including at least one output devices, the method steps comprising:
5   (a)   tracking utilization information for each output device;
6   (b)   analyzing the utilization information for optimization
7   opportunities; and,
8   (c)   configuring the network to exploit the optimization
9   opportunities.

1   16.   The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2   of tracking utilization information includes:
3   (a)   periodically retrieving the utilization information; and,
4   (b)   archiving the retrieved utilization information.

1   17.   The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step
2   of tracking utilization information includes tracking utilization information

3   selectively from network print clients, network print servers and network output

4   devices.

1   18.   The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step

2   of analyzing the utilization information includes searching selectively for

3   underused and overused output devices.

1   19.   The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step

2   of analyzing the utilization information for optimization opportunities includes

3   applying rules to the utilization information.

1   20.   The program storage device of claim 15 wherein the method step

2   of configuring the network includes selectively configuring network print clients,

3   network print servers and network output devices.